al-ibaanah
Book Publishing

كشف الكربة في
وصف أهل الغربة

Alleviating Grievances in Describing the Condition of the Strangers

Al-Haafidh Zayn-ud-Deen
Ibn Rajab Al-Hanbalee

Translated by
abu maryam isma'eel alarcon

al-ibaanah e-books

First Edition: October 2004

About the Book: This book is a translation of a short treatise entitled "*Kashf-ul-Kurbah fee wasfi Haali Ahlil-Ghurbah*" **[Alleviating Grievances in Describing the Condition of the Strangers**] written by the great Imaam, Al-Haafidh Zayn-ud-Deen Ibn Rajab Al-Hanbalee, may Allaah have mercy on him.

In this treatise, Ibn Rajab discusses the topic of the "Strangers", listing the many *ahaadeeth* of the Prophet ﷺ reported about them. They are given this name because they will be strange during the Last Days, due to their adherence to the Sunnah and to the Way of the first Muslims, the Salaf As-Saalih. So just as those who first accepted Islaam at the hands of Muhammad were considered strangers to their families and close ones, then indeed, those who adhere to the Sunnah in the last Days, when innovations and misguidance are rampant and widespread, will also be considered strangers to their families and close ones, not to mention the disbelievers.

It must be noted that Ibn Rajab uses several weak ahaadeeth in this treatise, which have been pointed out. Also, towards the end of his treatise, he begins to divert from the topic by going deep into the issue of inner strangeness, sometimes focusing on aspects that have no basis in Islaam, such as talk about *wajd*, *khulwah* and so on. These were Sufi concepts that were prevalent during his time. Consequently, the last pages of the treatise, which included several quotes and lines of poetry, were left out from this translation. However, the omission of this last part of the book does not detract from the overall meaning and intended theme of the treatise, and Allaah knows best. For the most part, the treatise is of great importance and is often referenced by the scholars, and that is what we hope to convey to the readers. All footnotes were added by the translator based on research and the use of several sources. We ask Allaah to accept this work as a sincere act and that He place it in our scale of good deeds on the Day of Judgement. And we ask that He benefit all the Muslims generally with it

A Publication of
Al-Ibaanah E-Books

TABLE OF CONTENTS

THE TREATISE

All praise is for Allaah with much praises and blessings, as our Lord loves and is pleased with and as is required for attaining the honor of His most Sublime Face.[1] And may the peace and blessings of Allaah be upon our teacher Muhammad ﷺ his family and his Companions.

Imaam Muslim reported in his *Saheeh* from the hadeeth of Abu Hurairah ﷺ that the Prophet ﷺ said: "**Islaam began as something strange and it will return to being strange as it began. So *Toobaa* [2] is for the strangers.**" [3]

Imaam Ahmad and Ibn Maajah have also reported this hadeeth on the authority of Ibn Mas'ood ﷺ with the addition at the end of it: **"It was said: 'O Messenger of Allaah, and who are the strangers?' He ﷺ said: 'The *Nuzaa'* (those who extract themselves) from their families and close relatives.'"** [4]

Abu Bakr Al-Aajuree also transmitted it, and in his report there occurs: **"It was said: 'Who are they, O Messenger of Allaah?' He ﷺ said: 'Those who rectify (themselves/others) when the people have become corrupt.'"** [5]

---

[1] What is meant here is the attainment of Paradise in which the people who are granted it will be able to see the Face of Allaah, as has been stated in various texts of the Qur'aan and the Sunnah.

[2] It is said that *Toobaa* means something good. Allaah mentions this word in Surah Ar-Ra'ad of His Final Revelation: **"Those who believe and do righteous deeds, *Toobaa* is for them and a pleasant destination."** According to Ibn Katheer's *Tafseer* (Abridged 1/281), Ibraaheem An-Nakha'ee (*rahimahullaah*), the great Taabi'ee, said it means "good is for them." Qataadah said: "When a man says '*Toobaa* for you' it means you have attained something good. 'Ikrimah and Mujaahid said that *Toobaa* means Paradise. And it is also said that *Toobaa* refers to a tree in Paradise which the Prophet ﷺ spoke of when he said: **"Verily, there is a tree in Paradise under the shadow of which a rider can travel for a hundred years without being able to cover (its distance) completely."** [*Saheeh Muslim*] This is what seems to be indicated in the above hadeeth, due to another narration reported on the Prophet, in which he said: **"*Toobaa* is a tree in Paradise. Its (shade's) distance (in traveling) is one hundred years. And the garments of the inhabitants of Paradise will be extracted from its branches."** Imaam Al-Albaanee graded it *hasan* in his *Silsilat-ul-Ahaadeeth as-Saheehah* (no. 1985).

[3] *Saheeh Muslim* (1/130); See *Sharh Saheeh Muslim* of Imaam An-Nawawee (2/175-176)

[4] *Sunan Ibn Maajah* (no. 3988), *Sunan At-Tirmidhee* (5/18) and he said it was authentic, *Musnad Ahmad* (5/296). It has also been recorded by Al-Khattaabee in his *Ghareeb-ul-Hadeeth* (1/175). Al-Albaanee declared it weak (*da'eef*) in his collection *Silsilat-ul-Ahaadeeth as-Saheehah* (no. 1273)

[5] This hadeeth is also reported by Ahmad and At-Tabaraanee and it is *saheeh* as has been stated by Saleem Al-Hilaalee in his book *Toobaa Lil-Ghurabaa* (no. 1). However the hadeeth with a different wording from the hadeeth of 'Abdur-Rahmaan bin Sanah is weak. See *Toobaa Lil-Ghurabaa* (no. 10)

Others have transmitted it with the following words, in which he ﷺ said: **"They are those who flee from trials (*fitan*) for the sake of their Religion."**

At-Tirmidhee reported it from the hadeeth of Katheer bin 'Abdillaah Al-Maznee on the authority of his father who reported from his grandfather that the Prophet ﷺ said: **"Verily, this Religion began as something strange. And it will go back to being something strange. So *Toobaa* is for the strangers – those who rectify what the people have corrupted after me of my Sunnah."** [6]

It has also been transmitted by At-Tabaraanee from the hadeeth of Jaabir ؓ on the Prophet ﷺ, and in the hadeeth there occurs: **"It was said: 'And who are they, O Messenger of Allaah?' He ﷺ said: 'They are those who rectify and make corrections when the people have become corrupted.'"** [7]

He (At-Tabaraanee) also reported it from the hadeeth of Sahl bin Sa'ad ؓ with a similar wording. [8]

Imaam Ahmad transmitted it from the hadeeth of Sa'ad bin Abee Waqqaas ؓ on the authority of the Prophet ﷺ. And it is stated in the hadeeth: **"So *Toobaa* on that day will be for the strangers – when the people have become corrupt."** [9]

---

[6] This hadeeth was reported by At-Tirmidhee in his *Sunan* (5/18) and he said it was *saheeh*. It was also reported by Ibn 'Adiyy in *al-Kaamil* (6/2080), At-Tabaraanee in *al-Kabeer* (17/16), Abu Nu'aim in *al-Hilyah* (2/10) and Al-Khateeb Al-Baghdaadee in *al-Jaami'* (1/112) as well as others. In his verification of the book *al-'Itisaam* of Imaam Ash-Shaatibee (1/22), Saleem Al-Hilaalee said concerning At-Tirmidhee's authentication of this hadeeth: "This is from the ahaadeeth that he, may Allaah have mercy on him, has overlooked. For indeed, Katheer (Ibn 'Abdillaah) is very weak. Rather, Ash-Shaafi'ee accused him of being a liar! And he described him with that (lying) as being one of his main supports, as occurs in *Manaaqib-ush-Shaafi'ee* of Al-Bayhaqee (1/547-548). This is a criticism (*jarh*) that reaches the highest level of severity. Thus his hadeeth are to be disregarded completely." Therefore, the hadeeth is *da'eef jiddan* (very weak) as is stated in *Toobaa Lil-Ghurabaa* (no. 13) and *Da'eef al-Jaami'-us-Sagheer* (no. 1441).

[7] This hadeeth has been reported by At-Tahaawee in *Mushkil-ul-Aathaar* (1/298), Al-Laalikaa'ee in *Sharh Usool 'Itiqaad Ahlus-Sunnah* (2/112), and Al-Bayhaqee in *az-Zuhd-ul-Kabeer* (200). Al-Haythamee attributed it to At-Tabaraanee in his book *Majma'-uz-Zawaa'id* (7/278), saying: "In its chain is 'Abdullaah bin Saalih, the scribe of Laith, and he is weak. However, he has been declared reliable."

[8] At-Tabaraanee reported this hadeeth in his *Kabeer* (6/164) and his *Sagheer* (1/104). Al-Haythamee said in *Majma'-uz-Zawaa'id* (7/278): "Its narrators are all of the standards of the *Saheeh* (collections), except Bakr bin Saleem, for he is reliable. Saleem Al-Hilaalee said in his verification of *Al-'Itisaam* (1/18): "Bakr bin Saleem is weak, however, he is used as a support during cases when hadeeth need to be backed up and supported. Al-Haafidh (Ibn Hajr) said in *at-Taqreeb*: 'He is acceptable' meaning when a hadeeth needs to be supported. And if this is not the case, then he is *layyin*."

In another narration transmitted by Imaam Ahmad and At-Tabaraanee from the hadeeth of 'Abdullaah bin 'Amr ﷺ, the Prophet ﷺ said: **"*Toobaa* is for the strangers." It was said: "And who are the strangers?" He ﷺ said: "A righteous people surrounded by people abounding in much evil. Those who disobey them are more numerous than those who obey them."** [10]

And it has been reported on 'Abdullaah bin 'Amr ﷺ in *marfoo'* and *mawqoof* [11] form in this hadeeth, that: **"It was said: 'Who are the strangers?' He ﷺ said: 'They are the ones who flee for the sake of their Religion. Allaah, may He be Exalted, will raise them (on the Day of Resurrection) with 'Eesaa bin Maryam.'"** [12]

The Prophet's statement **"Islaam began as something strange"** refers to the people before his ﷺ advent who were upon widespread deviance, as the Prophet ﷺ said: **"Indeed Allaah looked at the people of the earth and hated them, both Arabs and non-Arabs, except for some remnants from the People of the Book."** [13]

So when the Prophet was sent forth and began calling to Islaam, his call was not answered at first instance except by a few from each tribe. And those that did accept his call feared from their tribes and families lest they should be subjected to extreme punishment. And they would suffer while being patient with that for the sake of Allaah.

Due to their weakness, the (first) Muslims would be frightened by every opposing force and they would flee for the sake of their Religion to far-off lands as was shown when they migrated twice to the land of Abysinnia, and then when they migrated to Madeenah. And there was from among them, he who was tortured for the sake of Allaah and he who was

---

[9] This hadeeth is recorded by Imaam Ahmad, Al-Bazaar and Abu Ya'laa. Al-Haythamee said in *Majma'-uz-Zawaa'id* (7/277): "Its narrators are the narrators of the standard of the *Saheeh* (collections)." Saleem Al-Hilaalee declared it *saheeh* in *Toobaa Lil-Ghurabaa* (no. 11)

[10] Al-Haythamee (*rahimahullaah*) said in *Majma'-uz-Zawaa'id* (7/278): "In its chain is Ibn Lahee'ah and there is weakness in him." The hadeeth can be found in the *Musnad* of Imaam Ahmad (2/177). It is authentic due to its many paths of narration. Imaam Al-Albaanee authenticated it in *Saheeh al-Jaami'-us-Sagheer* (no. 3291)

[11] A *marfoo'* hadeeth is a statement that has been reported by a companion, yet "raised" to the level of a saying of the Prophet. A *mawqoof* hadeeth is a statement that is reported by a companion and "stopped", meaning it ends up being only his statement, as opposed to being raised to a saying of the Prophet.

[12] This hadeeth has been narrated by Imaam Ahmad in *mawqoof* form, and by his son 'Abdullaah in *marfoo'* form. It can be found in *az-Zuhd* (77149). The hadeeth is *da'eef* as has been clarified by Saleem Al-Hilaalee in his book *Toobaa Lil-Ghurabaa* (no. 3)

[13] *Saheeh Muslim* (Eng.): vol. 4, no. 6853. What is meant by the remnants of the People of the Book are those who stuck to their religion upon truth without changing it.

killed. **So those who entered into the fold of Islaam, back in those days – they were the strangers.**

Then Islaam spread after the *Hijrah* to Madeenah and its followers became victorious over every group. After that, the people entered into the Religion of Allaah in multitudes. And Allaah perfected the Religion for them and completed His favor upon them. Then the Messenger of Allaah died, and the Muslims were upon the utmost level due to their firm adherence to their Religion. They were powerful and dominant, and they continued to be upon this condition during the times (i.e. khilaafah) of Abu Bakr and 'Umar.

Then the Devil unleashed his evil plot upon the Muslims and discord fell between them. And the trials of **Doubts** (*Shubuhaat*) and **Desires** (*Shahawaat*) became widespread. These two evils did not stop increasing at all until the plan of the Devil was established and the majority of the creation obeyed him.

So from among them were those who entered into obedience to him by way of the evil of Doubts (*Shubuhaat*). And from among them, were those who fell into the evil of Desires (*Shahawaat*). And from among them, were those who combined between them both. All of that was from what the Messenger of Allaah ﷺ had warned us would occur.

As for the evil of Doubts:

Then it has been reported on the Prophet ﷺ through many paths of narration that his *ummah* would divide into more than seventy sects. This is based on the differing found in the reports concerning the exact number with which they will exceed the number seventy. And it was reported on him ﷺ that all of these groups would be in the Hellfire, except for one group – and it is that (group) that adheres to what he and his Companions were upon (during their time). [14]

[14] This hadeeth has been reported from a number of different routes. Perhaps the one most similar to what the author is paraphrasing here is that which has been reported by At-Tabaraanee in his *Mu'jam-us-Sagheer* (no. 724), in which the Prophet ﷺ said: **"This *ummah* will split into seventy-three sects, all of which will be in the Hellfire except one." They asked: "And which is that sect?"** He ﷺ said: **"(The ones that adhere to) That which I and my Companions are upon today."** In another narration on the authority of Anas bin Maalik ؓ the Prophet ﷺ said: **"Every one of them will be in the Hellfire except one, and it is the *Jamaa'ah*."** And in another narration on the authority of Abu Sufyaan ؓ: **"The Messenger of Allaah ﷺ stood amongst us one day and said: 'Indeed those before you from the People of the Book divided into seventy-two groups. And indeed, this group (Muslims) will divide into seventy-three. Seventy-two groups will be in the Fire and one of them will be in Paradise. And it is the *Jamaa'ah*.'"** This latter hadeeth was reported by Ahmad, Al-Haakim, Abu Dawood and others. Al-Haakim authenticated it and Adh-Dhahabee agreed. At-Tirmidhee (no. 2641) also reported a similar hadeeth to it and graded it *saheeh*. Imaam Al-Albaanee listed all its paths of narrations and different wordings in his *Silsilat-ul-Ahaadeeth as-Saheehah* (no. 204) and clarified that it

And as for the evil of Desires:
It is reported in *Saheeh Muslim* on the authority of 'Abdullaah bin 'Amr that the Prophet ﷺ said: **"When the treasures of the Persians and the Romans are opened for you, how will your people be?" 'Abdur-Rahmaan bin 'Awf ﷺ said: "We will say what Allaah has ordered us (to say)."[15] He ﷺ said: "Or other than that. You will compete against each other, then you will envy one another, then you will turn your backs on one another."** [16]

And in *Saheeh Al-Bukhaaree* on the authority of 'Amr bin 'Awf the Prophet ﷺ said: **"I swear by Allaah! It is not poverty that I fear for you. Rather, what I fear the most for you is that the pleasures of this world will be presented to you as they were presented to those before you. And you will compete against one another for it, just as they competed against one another. And it will destroy you, just as it destroyed them."** [17]

And there occurs in the two *Saheeh* collections on the authority of 'Uqbah bin 'Aamir a hadeeth from the Prophet ﷺ with a similar meaning.

When the treasures of Chosroes were opened for 'Umar bin Al-Khattaab, he began to weep and said: **"Indeed this (treasure) did not open upon a people ever, except that Allaah placed discord between them."** [18]

The Prophet ﷺ used to fear these two evils (of Doubts and Desires) for his *ummah* as has been reported in the *Musnad* of Imaam Ahmad on the authority of Abu Barzah that the Prophet ﷺ said: **"Indeed, I only fear for you the desires of transgression found in your stomachs and your private parts and the calamities (*fitan*) that lead people astray."** And in another narration there occurs: **"...and the desires (*hawaa*) that lead people astray."** [19]

So when a majority of the people fell victim to either or both of these evils, they began to cut off ties with one another and they began to hate one another. This only came after

---

is an authentic hadeeth without any doubt about its authenticity. In summary, the hadeeth and its additions are *hasan* due to its various paths of narrations, which serve as supporting evidences.

[15] He means by this: We will praise Him, thank Him and ask Him for an increase in His Bounty.

[16] *Saheeh Muslim* (no. 2962) and *Sunan Ibn Maajah* (no. 3996)

[17] *Saheeh Al-Bukhaaree* (Eng.): vol. 5, no. 351

[18] Refer to *al-Bidaayah-wan-Nihaayah* (7/70) of Ibn Katheer for an account of the event. It is recorded in his book under the section of the Battle of Jaloolaa'.

[19] Imaam Ahmad (4/423) and others reported this hadeeth. Al-Manaawee said that it had a good chain in his book *al-Jaami'-ul-Azhar* (1/146). Al-Albaanee graded it *saheeh* in his checking of *at-Targheeb wat-Tarheeb* (no. 49)

them having been brothers, loving and supporting one another. Indeed the evil of **Desires** became something common and accepted amongst a majority of the creatures. And it tested people by way of the worldly life and its pleasures. So that became the goal of the people's striving. They sought after it and became pleased with it. They became angry due to it and they hated for its sake and loved for its sake. Because of this, they would sever family ties and spill blood unlawfully. And for this purpose, they committed disobedience to Allaah.

As for the evil of **Doubts** and vain desires that lead astray, then it was because of this that the Muslims divided and became sects, some groups declaring others as disbelievers. Thus, they became enemies, divided into groups and parties. This only happened after them having been brothers – their hearts united upon the heart of one man. None of these sects is saved, except for the one saved sect (*al-Firqat-un-Naajiyah*). And they are the ones mentioned in the saying of the Prophet ﷺ:

"There will not cease to be a group from my *ummah* triumphant upon the truth. Those who oppose them will not be able to harm them, nor will those who abandon them, until Allaah's order comes about (Day of Judgment) and they are in that state." [20]

They will be the strangers – the ones who have been mentioned in the previous *ahaadeeth* – during the Last Days. They are the ones who will correct others when the people have become corrupt. They are those who will rectify what the people have corrupted of the Sunnah. They are the ones who will flee from affliction for the sake of their Religion. They are the ones who will extract themselves from their close relatives (for Allaah's sake).

This is because they are so few that you will not find any among them in an entire tribe (family), except one or two. In some tribes, you will not find any of them, just as it was when the first people accepted Islaam. This is the way the majority of the scholars have explained this hadeeth.

[20] *Saheeh Al-Bukhaaree* (4/252), *Saheeh Muslim* (no. 170), *Sunan At-Tirmidhee* (4/504), and *Sunan Ibn Maajah* (no. 3952)

THE STRANGENESS OF THE SUNNAH AND ITS ADHERENTS

Concerning the statement of the Prophet: **"Islaam began as something strange and will return to being strange, as it began"**, Imaam Al-Awzaa'ee (*rahimahullaah*) said:

"As for this, then it does not mean that Islaam will go away, rather it means that *Ahlus-Sunnah*[21] will go away, up to the point that there will not remain any from them in a land except one person."

Based on this understanding, there can be found much praise in the statements of the *Salaf* for the Sunnah and their describing it as being strange, and describing its adherents and followers as being few.

Al-Hasan Al-Basree (*rahimahullaah*) used to say to his companions: "Oh *Ahlus-Sunnah*! Be gentle with one another, and may Allaah have mercy on you, for indeed, you are from amongst the fewest of people." [22]

Yoonus bin 'Ubayd (*rahimahullaah*) said: "There is not a thing more strange than the Sunnah. But what is stranger than it, is the one who knows it."

Sufyaan Ath-Thawree (*rahimahullaah*) said: "Treat *Ahlus-Sunnah* kindly, for verily, they are strangers." [23]

The understanding of the term "Sunnah" to these scholars, was the way of the Prophet – that which he and his Companions were upon – free from **Doubts** (*Shubuhaat*) and **Desires** (*Shahawaat*). This is why Al-Fudayl bin 'Iyaad (*rahimahullaah*) would say: "*Ahlus-Sunnah* are those who know what enters their stomachs from the *Halaal* (lawful)."

That is since the consumption of *Halaal* is from the greatest aspects of the Sunnah, which the Prophet and his Companions were upon.

[21] What is meant by the term *Ahlus-Sunnah* are all the Muslims who strictly follow the Sunnah of the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ. They learn it, act upon it, enforce it and teach it to others. They consist of the scholars, their students and those that follow in their footsteps.

[22] This report was recorded by Al-Laalikaa'ee. Badr Al-Badr indicated its weakness in his notes to *Kashf-ul-Kurbah*. However, a similar narration to this one has been recorded by Ad-Daarimee (1/72) and its wording is: **"For verily, *Ahlus-Sunnah* are the least of people in number that have preceded, and they are the least of people in number who remain."** This narration is authentic. Refer to *Mafhoom Ahlis-Sunnati wal-Jamaa'ah* (pg. 84)

[23] This narration was recorded by Al-Laalikaa'ee in his *Sharh Usool 'Itiqaad Ahlis-Sunnah* (1/64) and it was mentioned from him by Ibn Al-Jawzee in *Talbees Iblees*. Refer to the book *Mafhoom Ahlis-Sunnati wal-Jamaa'ah* (pg. 85)

Then it remained the custom of the majority of the later scholars, from the scholars of Hadeeth and other fields, that the Sunnah consisted of that which was free from **Doubts** in regards to Creed. This was especially the case with issues such as the belief in Allaah, His Angels, His Books, His Messengers, the Last Day, and other issues such as Al-Qadar (Divine Pre-Decree) and the merits of the Companions. They compiled literary works concerning this knowledge and named them books of "Sunnah". This knowledge was only labeled with the name "Sunnah", because its significance was tremendous and all those who opposed it were on the brink of destruction.

And as for the complete Sunnah, then it is the path that is free and safe from **Doubts** and **Desires**, as has been stated by Al-Hasan, Yoonus bin 'Ubayd, Sufyaan, Al-Fudayl and others besides them. Due to this, its adherents are described as strange because of their small number and rarity in the Last Days.

This is why it has been mentioned in some of the previously stated reports that they are: **"A righteous people surrounded by people abounding in much evil. Those who disobey them are greater in number than those who obey them."** [24]

In this is an indication of the smallness of their amount in number and in the amount of those who answer and accept their call. We also are made aware of the greatness in number of those who oppose them and disobey them.

This is why there is much praise reported in numerous *ahaadeeth* for the one who sticks firmly to his Religion during the Last Days. And that he who does so will be like one who holds tightly onto hot pieces of coal. And that the one who acts upon it (i.e. the Sunnah), will receive fifty times the reward more than those before him.[25] This is because he will not find any supporters in doing good deeds (during those times).

These strangers fall into two categories: The first of them are those who rectify themselves when the people have become corrupt. The second category contains those who rectify what the people have corrupted of the Sunnah. And this (latter one) is the highest and most virtuous of the two categories.

---

[24] *Musnad Ahmad* (2/177), and its checking has been stated previously.

[25] This saying is based on the following hadeeth of the Prophet: **"Verily, after you there will come times requiring patience. (In those days) the one who holds fast to that which you are upon will have the reward of fifty amongst you. He will receive the reward of fifty (i.e. the one holding onto the way of the Companions in later times)."** [Reported by Al-Marwazee in *as-Sunnah* (no. 35), At-Tabaraanee in *al-Kabeer* (17/117), Abu Dawood in his *Sunan* (no. 3441), At-Tirmidhee (no. 3057), who declared it *saheeh*, and Ibn Maajah (no. 4014). Al-Albaanee authenticated it in *as-Saheehah* (no. 494)]

THE STRANGENESS OF THE BELIEVER DURING THE LAST DAYS

At-Tabaraanee and others transmitted, with a chain of narration that has some speculation to it[26] from the hadeeth of Abu Umaamah ﷺ that the Prophet ﷺ said: **"Verily, for every matter there is a progression and a regression. And verily from the progression of this Religion is what you used to be upon from blindness and ignorance and what Allaah sent me with. And verily from the progression of this Religion is that the clan was taught (Islaam) by its family members, to the point that there was not found amongst them (the tribes) anyone except for one evildoer or two evildoers. So these two were oppressed and degraded. When they want to speak, they are restrained, subdued and persecuted. And verily from the regression of this Religion is that the tribe acts harshly against its family members, to the point that there is not seen amongst them anyone except one *faqeeh* (one with understanding) or two *faqeehs*. Thus they will both be oppressed and degraded. If they speak and command the good and forbid the evil, they are restrained, subdued and persecuted. And they will not find any supporters or helpers in that matter."**

Thus, the believer who is knowledgeable of the Sunnah and who possesses understanding of the Religion is described in this hadeeth as being one who during the Last Days – at the point of its corruption – will be oppressed, debased and not able to find any helpers or supporters.

At-Tabaraanee also reported with a weak chain of narration from Ibn Mas'ood ﷺ that the Prophet ﷺ said: **"And verily from its signs (i.e. the Hour) is that the believer will be in the sight of his tribe, more lower (in status) than the *naqad*."** [27]

And it is recorded in the *Musnad* of Imaam Ahmad that 'Ubaadah bin As-Saamit ﷺ said to one of his companions: "It is imminent that should your life be prolonged for you, you will see a man who recites the Qur'aan upon the tongue of Muhammad repeating it and displaying it, allowing its *halaal* and forbidding its *haraam* – that he will be lowered in his status and his position will be neglected amongst you and considered just as the position of a dead donkey."

And similar to this is the saying of Ibn Mas'ood ﷺ: "There will come upon the people a time in which the believer will become lower than the bondmaid."

---

[26] Al-Haythamee (*rahimahullaah*) said: "In its chain is 'Alee bin Yazeed, and he is rejected." [*Majma'-uz-Zawaa'id*: 7/261]. Thus the hadeeth is *da'eef* (weak)

[27] The hadeeth is as Ibn Rajab stated in that it has a weak chain of narration, may Allaah have mercy on him. Thus, the hadeeth is *da'eef*. The *naqad*, according to the book *al-Lisaan*, is a type of sheep with short feet and an ugly face that can be found in the Bahrain area.

Indeed the believer will only be debased in the Last Days due to his strangeness in front of the evildoers from among the people of **Doubts** and **Desires**. Every one of them will hate him and abuse him because of his opposing of their way by following his way, and because of the seeking of his goal over their goal, and because of his evidences over what is with them.

When Dawood At-Taa'ee died, Ibn As-Samaak said: "Indeed Dawood looked with his heart at what was in front of him and the sight of his heart overtook the sight of his eyes. So it was as if he no longer saw what you were looking at, and as if you could not see what he was looking at. And you were amazed at him, and he was amazed at you. It became strange to you that he was alive in the middle of death."

From among them was he whose own family and children would hate him due to their loathing of his condition. 'Umar bin 'Abdil-'Azeez once heard his wife say: "May Allaah relieve us from you." So he said: "Ameen."

Our Salaf (Predecessors), during their lifetimes, would mainly describe the believer with the quality of strangeness, as has been mentioned previously in their narrations.

And from the words of Ahmad bin 'Aasim Al-Andaakee, who was one of the biggest scholars at the time of Sulaymaan Ad-Daaraanee, was: "Indeed, I have reached from all the times, a time when Islaam has returned to being strange as it began. In it, the description of truth has returned to being strange as it began. If you were to turn to the scholar, you would find him being tested with the love of this worldly life and the love for honor and authority. And if you were to turn to the worshipper, you would find him ignorant in his worship, deceived and fallen victim to his enemy Iblees (i.e. the Devil). He has mounted to the highest levels of worship while being ignorant of how to perform them so how can he be at that level? And the rest of the people are from among the ignorant followers, simple-minded and quick to follow a way, as if he were a wolf looking to steal a sheep, or a hungry lion, or a fox on the prowl. This is the description of the people of your time from the carriers of knowledge and the Qur'aan and the callers of wisdom." [28]

This was the description of the people of his time. So how much has the situation increased and the crisis become greater after it. Indeed, it has reached a point that would have never been thought of nor imagined!

---

[28] *Hilyat-ul-Awliyaa* (9/286)

CLINGING ONTO THE SUNNAH DURING TIMES OF AFFLICTION

At-Tabaraanee reported from the hadeeth of Abu Hurairah ﷺ that the Prophet ﷺ said: **"The one who clings onto my Sunnah at the time of the corruption of my *ummah* will receive the reward of a martyr."** [29]

And Abush-Shaikh Al-Asbahaanee reported with a chain connected to Al-Hasan (Al-Basree), that he (*rahimahullaah*) said: "If a man from the first generation of Muslims were sent (to us) today, he would not recognize anything from Islaam except for this prayer!" Then he (*rahimahullaah*) said: "I swear by Allaah, that if he were to live to the time of these evils, he would see the innovator calling to his innovation, or the individual involved with the worldly life calling to his worldly affairs. Then Allaah would protect him and his heart would long for that which the *Salaf As-Saalih* (pious predecessors) were upon. And so he would follow their footsteps and act according to their ways. For him there will be a great reward."

Ibn Al-Mubaarak reported from Al-Fudayl from Al-Hasan that he once mentioned the rich and extravagant man who has authority and who amasses wealth claiming that he has no end in it. And then he mentioned the misguided innovator who sets out against the Muslims with an unsheathed sword, changing the meaning of what Allaah has revealed concerning the disbelievers to apply to the Muslims.

Then he said: "Your Sunnah, and I swear by the One besides whom there is nothing worthy of worship except Him, is between these two: between the self-sufficient one and the hard-hearted; the extravagant one and the ignorant. So have patience upon it, for indeed, *Ahlus-Sunnah* are from amongst the fewest of people, those who do not fall into the category of the extravagant ones in their excessiveness nor do they fall with the innovators in the following of their desires. Rather, they bear with patience upon their Sunnah until they meet their Lord. So be that way, if Allaah wills!"[30] Then he said: "I swear by Allaah, that if a man were to reach these evils, he would hear someone say: 'Come over to me!', and someone else say: 'Come over to me!' So he should say: 'No! I do not want anything but the Sunnah of Muhammad', seeking after it and asking questions on it. Indeed this one will be given a great reward. So be that way, if Allaah wills!"

---

[29] This is a weak hadeeth reported by Abu Nu'aim who attributes it to At-Tabaraanee. Al-Haythamee (1/172) said: "In the chain is Muhammad bin Saalih Al-'Adawee. I did not find anyone that wrote a biography for him. The rest of the narrators are reliable." Abu Nu'aim indicated its weakness by labeling it strange from 'Abdul-'Azeez from 'Ataa. So the hadeeth is *da'eef* due to the condition of Muhammad bin Saalih. See *Silsilat-ul-Ahaadeeth ad-Da'eefah* (no. 327) of Imaam Al-Albaanee.

[30] The chain quoted for this report by Ibn Rajab is not authentic. However, a similar narration to this can be found in *Sunan Ad-Daarimee* (1/71-72). See *Mafhoom Ahlis-Sunnah* (pg. 84-85)

THE HADEETH OF IMAAM 'ALEE CONCERNING KNOWLEDGE

And from this understanding, is what Abu Nu'aim and others have reported from Kumail bin Ziyaad[31] on the authority of 'Alee ﷺ that he said:

"The people are of three types: the learned scholar, the student of knowledge who is upon the path towards salvation and the uncivilized ignorant follower following every ideology, blowing in the direction of every wind. He is not guided by the light of knowledge nor is he established upon a firm pillar."

Then he mentioned some words on the benefit of knowledge, up to the point where he said: "Here! Indeed, here is immense knowledge – and he pointed to his chest – if only I could gather those who would carry it!

Nay, instead I have found he who is unreliable and not to be entrusted with it. Doing the works of the Religion for the sake of this worldly life, making a demonstration of the favors of Allaah (i.e. the knowledge he was given) in front of His servants and using His arguments against His beloved ones (the true scholars).

Or he is one who is honest and obedient towards the carriers of truth, while possessing no understanding and insight (of his own) in his mind. Doubt has pierced his heart and troubled it upon the first time problems were presented to it. Indeed, he is neither this nor that.

Or he is one who is greedy for fulfilling his pleasures. He has become submissive to the guidance of his desires or infatuated with the piling up of wealth and treasures. These individuals are not from among the shepherds of the Religion in any way. The closest things in resemblance to them are the cattle that graze about freely. Just like that, the knowledge has died with the death of its carriers. [32]

---

[31] He is Kumail bin Ziyaad An-Nakha'ee (*rahimahullaah*). He was one of the righteous and noble amongst the Taabi'een. He was captured and killed by Al-Hajaaj bin Yoosuf Ath-Thaqafee in 82H. See *Al-Ma'rifah wat-Taareekh* (2/481) of Al-Fasawee (*rahimahullaah*).

[32] The great scholar Ibn Abil-'Izz Al-Hanafee (*rahimahullaah*) said in his book *Al-Itibaa'* (pg. 86): "In this narration, the Commander of the Believers has divided the blameworthy carriers of knowledge into three categories: (1) The wicked innovator who is not trustworthy and has no *Eemaan*. He is the one who rejects the truth which the Book came with, despises the creation and argues about the verses of Allaah without any authority. There is only pride in his heart; (2) the blind-follower that follows without any clear guidance or certainty, and; (3) the one who follows the desires of the body and wealth."

O Allaah! Verily, do not isolate on this earth, he who establishes the evidences for Your sake, whether he be apparent and well known or fearful and obscure in order that the evidences and clear proofs of Allaah may not be refuted.

And how many of them are there? Where are they? I swear by Allaah, they are the fewest in number, yet the greatest in stature in the sight of Allaah. Allaah preserves His evidences and manifest proofs through them until their likes desist from it and plant it into the hearts of those similar to them.

Through them, knowledge is fortified upon the reality of evidences. And they spread the glad tidings of the spirit of certainty. They soften what those who give in to excessiveness have roughened. And they draw close to that which the ignorant feel repelled by and estranged from.

They accompany the world with their bodies while their souls are drawn towards the great abode. They are Allaah's aides on His earth and the callers towards His Religion. And they long for their look (at Him in Paradise)." [33]

[33] This report has been transmitted by Abu Nu'aim in *al-Hilyah* (1/79) and Al-Khateeb in *al-Faqeeh wal-Mutafaqqih* (1/49). Also see *Jaami' Bayaan-ul-'Ilm* of Ibn 'Abdil-Barr (2/112) and *al-Bidaayah wan-Nihaayah* of Ibn Katheer (9/47). Al-Hilaalee mentioned it in one of his articles in *Asaalah* magazine (Sha'baan No. 3, 1413H).

CATEGORIES OF THE BEARERS OF KNOWLEDGE

The Commander of the Believers has divided the carriers of knowledge into three categories:

Category One: The People of Doubts
They consist of the one who has no evidences from the carriers of knowledge. Doubt has pierced his heart when it was first presented to him. He grasped it and thus fell into mass confusion and uncertainty. From that, he came out producing such acts as innovations and misguided affairs.

Category Two: The People of Desires
Their portion is of two types: The first consists of he who seeks after the worldly life, under the pretense of desiring knowledge. So he makes knowledge a means of attaining worldly goals. The second portion consists of the one who is overcome with the desire of amassing worldly gains, its riches and its treasures.

None of these types of people are from amongst the shepherds of the Religion. Rather, their similitude is only like that of the cattle.

For this reason, Allaah the Most High has compared those who were entrusted with the Torah and then failed that trust to donkeys carrying books. And He has compared the learner of evil, the one who detaches himself from the verses of Allaah, clinging onto this world and following his lusts, with the likeness of a dog. The donkey and the dog are the lowest forms of animals and the worst types of examples.

Category Three: The Carriers of Knowledge
They are the possessors of knowledge. They uphold it, protect it and establish it upon the evidences and clear proofs of Allaah.

It already has been stated that they are the fewest of people yet greatest in stature in the sight of Allaah. This is an indication towards their few numbers and towards the strangeness of the carriers of knowledge from this category.

Al-Hasan Al-Basree (*rahimahullaah*) has also divided the carriers of the Qur'aan into a similar division as that of 'Alee's division of the bearers of knowledge.

Al-Hasan Al-Basree (*rahimahullaah*) said: "The reciters of the Qur'aan are of three types: Those who take it as a commodity and gain their sustenance from it. Those who establish its words, yet neglect its commandments (i.e. read it but don't practice it). Due to (their knowledge of) it, they act arrogantly towards the people of their land and they

use it (the Qur'aan) as a support for gaining positions of authority. These types of people from among the bearers of the Qur'aan are many. May Allaah diminish their number! There is also a type of people that apply the remedy of the Qur'aan and thus place it over the sickness of their hearts. Due to it, their battles come to a standstill and they feel compassionate in their burnooses (long capes worn by the people of old). And they feel a sense of fear (of Allaah) and the worries (of the worldly life) have left them. They are the ones upon whom Allaah sends His rain down and He sends victory through them over the enemies. By Allaah, this type of people from among the carriers of the Qur'aan are more honorable than that of flaming torches in the sight of the rest of the reciters of the Qur'aan."

Thus, he (*rahimahullaah*) has informed us that this group – and they are the reciters of the Qur'aan who place it as a cure for their hearts, such that all traces of fear and worry leave them – is more honorable amongst the other reciters than the example of flaming torches.

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE PEOPLE OF KNOWLEDGE

The Commander of the Believers ﷺ has described this category from the carriers of knowledge with certain attributes:

Among them is that: **"Through them, the knowledge is fortified upon the reality of evidences."**

The meaning of this is that the knowledge directs them to the highest of goals and this is the awareness of Allaah. Thus they fear Him and love Him to the point that everything that is difficult upon others becomes easy for them.

So they do not look for a way towards that which others seek a way towards, from those who stop with this worldly life, its attractions and its pleasures. And from those who have pride in that and do not spread the knowledge, exaltation and honoring of Allaah in their hearts. Rather, they are the ones who turn towards that which the self-sufficient ones have abandoned.

Verily, the self-sufficient one, who has fallen and given into the desires of the world and its pleasures, finds difficulty in abandoning its desires and pleasures. This is because there is no substitute that could replace his desire for this world if he were to abandon it. So he does not have the patience to abandon it.

In the hearts of this type of people, for what they seek a way towards, is the biggest substitute over the desire to acquire the knowledge of Allaah and the love and honor for Him. This is as Al-Hasan (*rahimahullaah*) used to say: "Verily, the ones who love Allaah are only those who inherit the good life and taste its pleasures due to what they seek a way towards, such as the private attachment to their Beloved (Allaah), and due to what they find from the sweetness of their love for Him in their hearts."

These individuals only befriend that which the ignorant feel repelled by because those who are ignorant about Allaah are opposed to abandoning the worldly life and its pleasures. And this is because they don't know anything that can compare to it (i.e. the worldly life) and thus it is that which they love and befriend. On the other hand, these individuals feel repelled by that and instead find love in Allaah, His remembrance, awareness of Him, love for Him, and the recitation of His Book. Meanwhile, those who are ignorant about Allaah feel repelled by these things and do not find any love or enjoyment in them.

Another of their attributes, which the Commander of the Believers described them with, was that: **“They accompany the world with their bodies while their souls are drawn towards the great abode.”**

This indicates that they do not take this world as their home nor are they content with it as a place of residence or a place of rest. Indeed, they only see it as a transition and they do not take it as a final abode. All of the messengers and revealed Books advised towards this aspect. Allaah informed us in His Book of the believing man from the house of Pharaoh who said to his people while he was lecturing them:

يَا قَوْمِ إِنَّمَا هَذِهِ الْحَيَاةُ الدُّنْيَا مَتَاعٌ وَإِنَّ الْآخِرَةَ هِيَ دَارُ الْقَرَارِ

“O my people! Truly, the life of this world is nothing but a (quick passing) transition, and verily, the Hereafter that is the home that will remain forever." [Surah Ghaafir: 39]

The Prophet ﷺ said to Ibn ‘Umar: **“Be in this world as if you were a stranger or a passer-by.”** [34]

So it is to be in this world as if you did not exist and in the next life as if you did not cease to exist.

And in another report it is stated: **“Count yourself amongst the inhabitants of the graveyards.”** [35]

From the advice that the Maseeh ‘Eesaa gave, was his words to his companions: “Pass through it and do not become an inhabitant of it.”

And he also said: “Who is the one who will build a home upon the waves of the ocean? This is the worldly life, so do not take it as a home that will last forever.”

Thus, the believer, in this world is like the stranger crossing through a land other than his own, longing for his homeland and the day when he will return to it. He makes provision of what is necessary for his path back homeward. He does not compete for status with the people of the land he is passing through. Nor does he grieve over the degradation he experiences while amongst them.

[34] *Saheeh Al-Bukhaaree* (Eng.): vol. 8, no. 425
[35] *Sunan Ibn Maajah* (no. 4114). This addition was graded weak in *Da’eef Sunan Ibn Maajah* (no. 895)

Al-Fudayl bin 'Iyaad (*rahimahullaah*) said: "The believer in this world is worried and distressed. His main concern is to repair his equipment (as one who is stranded fixes his vehicle)."

Al-Hasan (*rahimahullaah*) said: "The believer in this world is like a stranger. He does not become upset when it (the world) degrades him, nor does he compete with others with regard to what it gives of honor. For him is a condition and for the people is a condition."

In reality, the believer is a stranger in this world because his forefather (Aadam) used to originally reside in the eternal abode and was then cast out from it. So he is constantly longing to return to his first place of residence. And he is always concerned with returning to the home from which he was cast out of.

This is as is said: "Love of one's homeland is part of Faith." [36]

And as it is said:

"How many homes in the world does the young man take charge of.
Yet his longing will forever be for his first home."

Some of our scholars [37] have said:

"So rush to the Gardens of Eden for indeed
It is your original home, and in it is a place of rest.
However, we are in the captivity of the enemy, so don't you see?
Shall we return to our homes and find peace?
And it has been determined that when the stranger is far away
and his home has disappeared, then he is lost.
So what type of strangeness is greater than our strangeness
which the enemies amongst us have manifested?"

---

[36] This statement is based on a fabricated hadeeth: **"Love of ones homeland is part of *Eemaan* (Faith)."** Imaam Al-Albaanee declared it *mawdoo'* (fabricated) and he listed several scholars from the past that held the same opinion. It is perhaps for this reason, that the author (Ibn Rajab) has not attributed it to the Prophet, but merely claimed it as a saying. However, the meaning of the statement itself seems to be incorrect. The scholars have discussed various meanings for it. What is the most correct is that if it is used as a saying, then it is correct in the context that the author (Ibn Rajab) has put it in here, in the sense that the homeland refers to the original abode of Paradise. Therefore, the love for this original abode is from the aspects of Faith. The saying taken in any other sense would breed love for nationalism and party spirit and these two are abhorred and detested in the Religion. Refer to Imaam Al-Albaanee's long discussion of this statement in his *al-Ahaadeeth ad-Da'eefah* (vol. 1, no.36).

[37] He is referring here to his teacher Ibn Al-Qayyim. See his book *Haadee Al-Arwaah* (pg. 7).

TYPES OF BELIEVERS ACCORDING TO THEIR STRANGENESS

The believers in this category can be further divided into several categories. From among them is he whose heart is attached to Paradise. And from among them is he whose heart is attached to His Creator. And these are the '*Aarifoon* (those who have complete awareness of Allaah). Perhaps, the Commander of the Believers 'Alee ﷺ was only referring to this category. Thus, the '*Aarifoon* have their bodies in this world while their hearts are with their Guardian (Allaah).

And from the *Maraaseel* of Al-Hasan, the Prophet ﷺ reported that Allaah said: **"The sign of purity is that the heart of the servant is attached to Me. So if it is that way, then he will not forget (Me) under any condition. And if it is that way, I will bless him with preoccupation of (his time with) Me in order that he will not forget Me. So if he does not forget Me, I will change his heart. So when he talks, he will talk for My Sake and when he remains silent, he will remain silent for My Sake. He is the one whom I have given assistance from Myself."**

The people of this condition are the strangers amongst the strangers and their strangeness is the greatest of strangeness.

TYPES OF STRANGENESS

Indeed, the strangeness in the sight of those who have treaded its path is of two types: the apparent and the hidden.

The Apparent:
The strangeness of those who correct themselves and others in the presence of evildoers
The strangeness of the truthful in front of the people of hypocrisy and those who show off
The strangeness of the scholars in the presence of the people who are ignorant and possess bad manners
The strangeness of the scholars seeking the next life in the presence of the scholars of this worldly life who are those deprived of the fear and humility (of Allaah).
And the strangeness of the ascetics in the presence of those who seek what depletes and does not remain.

The Hidden:
The strangeness of one's desires – and it is the strangeness of the '*Aarifoon* amidst the entire creation, even including the scholars, the worshippers and the ascetics, for verily, these (three) stop at where their knowledge, worship and asceticism take them. But these individuals only stop when they reach He whom they worship and their hearts do not swerve away from Him. This is what Abu Sulaymaan Ad-Daaraanee used to say about their attributes: "Their longing is not like the longing of the people, and their desire is for the Hereafter contrary to the desires of the people. Their supplication is not like the supplication of the people."

And he (*rahimahullaah*) was once asked concerning what the best of deeds was, so he began to weep and said: "It is that He takes over your heart and so you are not seen wanting from this world or the next one, anything other than Him."

Yahyaa bin Mu'aadh (*rahimahullaah*) said: "The *zaahid* (ascetic) is the stranger of this world and the *'aarif* is the stranger of the Hereafter."

He is indicating that the one who abandons the worldly life is a stranger amidst the people of this world, while the one who is aware of Allaah is a stranger amidst the people of the Hereafter. Neither the worshippers nor the ascetics will be able to recognize him.

Verily, only those who are similar to him and whose desires are similar to his desires will be able to recognize him. Or perhaps all of these strange qualities or most or some of them will be gathered in the '*Aarif* (one who is aware of Allaah). So let no one ask about

his strangeness at that point. Thus the ‘*Aarifoon* are the foremost to the people of this world and the Hereafter.

Yahyaa bin Mu’aadh (*rahimahullaah*) said: “The ‘*Aabid* (worshipper) is well-known (amongst the people), while the ‘*Aarif* (knowledgeable one) is hidden (unknown)."

And perhaps the condition of the ‘*Aarif* is hidden from even himself, due to the concealment of his condition and the bad thoughts he holds for himself.

Ibraaheem bin Adham (*rahimahullaah*) said: “I have not seen this matter except in a man who did not know that about himself nor did the people know him.”

In the hadeeth of Sa'ad ﷺ the Prophet ﷺ said: **“Verily, Allaah loves the servant who is fearfully submissive of Allaah (i.e. has *Taqwaa*), who is prosperous and who is concealed.”** [38]

And in the hadeeth of Mu’aadh bin Jabal ﷺ the Prophet ﷺ said: **“Verily, Allaah loves the righteous ones, those who possess *Taqwaa*, those who are concealed. When they are absent, they are not missed. And when they are present, they are not recognized.”** [39]

These individuals are the roads of guidance and the lampposts of knowledge.

‘Alee bin Abee Taalib said: “*Toobaa* is for every servant who does not know the people nor do the people know him, yet Allaah knows him, being well pleased (with him). These are the stars of guidance. Every darkening evil has been removed from them.”

So these individuals are the most specific (i.e. few) of strangers. They are the ones who flee from trials for the sake of their Religion. They are the ones who extract themselves from their families and who will be resurrected with 'Eesaa bin Maryam. And they are in the presence of the inhabitants of the Hereafter, more honorable than flaming torches. So what is their condition amidst the inhabitants of this world? Their condition is for the most part concealed from these two groups (inhabitants of this world and the next)…

[The treatise continues for a few more pages discussing themes founded upon Sufi concepts, which have no basis in Islaam and little benefit. Therefore, the translation will end here, all praise be to Allaah through whose Grace all good deeds come to pass]

---

[38] *Saheeh Muslim* (4/2277)
[39] Reported by Al-Haakim in his *Mustadrak* (1/4) and he authenticated it. Adh-Dhahabee agreed.